



Coconino County Sheriff's Office

MEDIA RELEASE

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Transient Arrested for Multiple Counts of Burglary in the Blue Ridge Area

Flagstaff, AZ – Sheriff Bill Pribil of the Coconino County Sheriff's Office is pleased to announce the arrest of 46 year old Michael Ray Fountain for 3 counts of auto theft and 13 counts of burglary that occurred in the Blue Ridge area. He is being held at the Coconino County Jail on a bond of \$380,000.

Beginning in May of 2005 deputies and detectives of the Coconino County Sheriff's Office investigated numerous auto thefts and burglaries of vehicles and travel trailers that were occurring in unimproved areas in close proximity to the Northern Arizona Community of Blue Ridge. Investigators believed the crimes were committed by the same suspect or group of suspects.

On Saturday June 10, 2006 Detective Mike Sifling coordinated a covert operation involving 4 uniformed deputies of the Coconino County Sheriff's Office and 3 law enforcement officers of the United States Forest Service. Decoy vehicles and travel trailers were placed in key locations where reoccurring burglaries had taken place during multiple dates and were believed to have been perpetrated by the same suspect.

Coconino County Sheriff's Deputy Richard Shouse was in full uniform in a fully marked patrol vehicle parked in one of the locations where decoy vehicles were positioned. He was approached by Michael Ray Fountain who engaged in a conversation with the Deputy. Mr. Fountain made several inconsistent statements regarding his length of stay in the area and the actual location of his camp site. Eventually, Mr. Fountain took Deputy Shouse to his camp site where numerous items of stolen property were located.

Mr. Fountain made statements implicating himself in four auto thefts, 3 in Coconino County and one in Gila County all 4 vehicles were subsequently recovered. Mr. Fountain also implicated himself in 16 burglaries of vehicles or travel trailers, 13 in Coconino County and 3 in Gila County. He directed investigators to several locations where he concealed or buried stolen items. Numerous firearms were found buried at one of these locations.

Investigators estimate the value of the recovered vehicles and other stolen property to be in excess of \$150,000 dollars. Some of the recovered property is believed to have been taken during burglaries that have not been reported to the Coconino County Sheriff's Office. Community members who have been the victim of a burglary in the Blue Ridge area since May of 2005 are asked to report the crime by calling (928) 774-4523.

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